

THE NATIONAL HELLENIC RESEARCH FOUNDATION  
**INSTITUTE FOR BYZANTINE RESEARCH**

**RESEARCH SERIES 2**

**ALEXANDER KAZHDAN**

**A HISTORY OF BYZANTINE  
LITERATURE**

**(650 - 850)**

**IN COLLABORATION WITH  
LEE F. SHERRY – CHRISTINE ANGELIDI**

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ATHENS 1999

Με την τεχνική υποστήριξη του Ελληνικού Ιδρύματος Πολιτισμού

Published with the technical support of the Foundation for Hellenic Culture

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Βασιλέως Κωνσταντίνου 48, 116 35 Αθήνα

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Distribution: HESTIA, Solonos 60, 106 72 Athens-GR, FAX: 36 06 759

ISSN 1108-3840

ISBN 960-371-010-5

## CHAPTER THREE

### THE MONASTIC WORLD CHRONICLE: THEOPHANES THE CONFESSOR

One of the most interesting aspects of literary development ca. 800 is the sudden revival of historical writing. After a hundred-year barren period, the Byzantines turned to their past, and several works appeared almost simultaneously, the greatest of which is the *Chronographia* of Theophanes, usually dubbed *Homologetes* or (in Latin) *Confessor*. In the words of I. Ševčenko, the *Chronographia* comprises “the jewel of middle Byzantine historiography”.<sup>1</sup> Just as Shakespeare in the Elizabethan period was surrounded by a constellation of playwrights, so, too, Theophanes worked in a milieu of minor historians (or chronographers —we shall use the words as synonyms), whether his predecessors, contemporaries or successors. It was he, however, who was to have the greatest influence on subsequent historiography. Constantine VII (or one of his courtiers), in the book *On the Administration of the Empire*, referred several times to the *Chronicle* (or history) of Theophanes (although we do not know whether he used it in the complete or abbreviated version),<sup>2</sup> and at the court of Constantine VII an anonymous continuation of Theophanes was produced. At the end of the eleventh century, John Skylitzes considered Theophanes a paragon of historical writing and claimed that those after him who had ventured on a similar project either lacked his precision or simply limited themselves to reciting the list of emperors in chronological order (Skyl., p. 3.16-23). Whether we agree with this view or not, Skylitzes, in his high esteem of Theophanes, expressed an opinion typical of the average Byzantine reader.

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<sup>1</sup> I. ŠEVČENKO, The Search for the Past in Byzantium around the Year 800, *DOP* 46, 1992, 287.

<sup>2</sup> P. YANNOPOULOS, Théophraste abrégé au Xe siècle, *Byzantina* 15, 1989, 307-314.

### A. Predecessors and contemporaries

In the preamble to his historical work, Skylitzes names one more chronicler whom he values highly: George, monk and *synkellos* of the patriarch Tarasios (784-806). Besides this short note, not much is known about George's life and career. He probably spent some time in Palestine<sup>3</sup> before accepting the position at the patriarchate of Constantinople, but how long he stayed there and which functions he carried out, we do not know.

The *Select Chronography*,<sup>4</sup> which covers the period from the Creation to Diocletian (284) and was completed in 808-810, is not a literary work in the proper sense of the word. Rather, it belongs to what we may call scientific prose. Its main goals are two: to establish correct chronological order (for which purpose he had to reach agreement between Biblical events and the events of Egyptian, Persian, Greek and Roman history), and to refute the erroneous calculations of his predecessors,<sup>5</sup> or as he puts it, to distinguish truth from falsity (p. 17.26-27, and many other instances). Time itself is perceived as a mystical material power, and George believes that it is not accidental that the most important events in universal history (Creation of the world, Annunciation, Resurrection: p. 1.11-20) occurred on March 25, and he is obsessed by the "relativity of calendars". Different peoples, he notes, have different months (p. 6.16-17), and he "scientifically" synchronizes various eras basing his calculations on a variety of calendars.<sup>6</sup>

George refers to numerous writers whom he claims to have used as sources ("He read many chronographies and histories," Theophanes says of him, "and he examined them critically"); he inserts long passages from these works into his presentation of events; some of these historians he praised, others he upbraided, and to the latter category belong not only pagans like Berossos and Manethon, who contradict the Bible, but also some Christian authors, such as Julius Africanus and Eusebios of Caesarea.

A contemporary of the Iconoclastic crisis and *synkellos* of the Iconodule patriarch Tarasios, George seems to have been unenthusiastic about the debate concerning icon worship. He knows that the image of Christ "not-made-by-hand" was sent to cure Abgar, king of Edessa, but, interestingly, George defines this image as a *χαράκτις* (p. 399.20-21,

<sup>3</sup> ŠEVČENKO, *The Search*, 289 n. 29 (following R. LAQUEUR, *RE*, 2. Reihe 4, 1932, 1389f.), rejects the doubts expressed by V. GRECU, *Hat Georgios Synkellos weite Reise übernommen?*, *Bull. de l'Acad. Roum. Sect. hist.* 28/2, 1947, 241-245 (the view accepted, among others, by HUNGER, *Lit.* 1, 331f.).

<sup>4</sup> *Georgii Syncelli Ecloga chronographica*, ed. A. MOSHAMMER, Leipzig 1984, 1.3-5 and 360.1-3.

<sup>5</sup> On George's criticism of his predecessors see W. ADLER, *Time Immemorial: Archaic History and its Sources in Christian Chronography*, Washington 1989, 132-158. Cf. G. L. HUXLEY, *On the Erudition of George the Synkellos*, *Proceedings of the R. Irish Academy* 81, 1981, C. 6, 207-217.

<sup>6</sup> See for instance J. TUBACH, *Synkellos' Kalender der Hebräer*, *Vigiliae Christianae* 47, 1993, 379-389.

400.2-3), not as an icon. The term “icon” emerges in a different, heathen context: the emperor Gaius [Caligula] defiled synagogues by setting there his “icons”, statues and altars (p. 402.16-17, 20); in the shrine of Bel there were “icons” of zoomorphic beings (p. 30.4), and again George speaks of the idolatrous (εἰδωλομανεστία) and insubstantial substances (an oxymoron rare in his work) in the shrine of Bel which Alexander Polyhistor calls “icons” (p. 32.20-22). On the other hand, George is interested in the cross as the sign of victory: like Kosmas the Melode, he stressed that Moses had divided the waters of the Red Sea by using the sign of cross (p. 149.9). Yet there is no cross either in the Biblical passage (*Exod.* 14.27) or in the *Paschal Chronicle* (p. 142.10-11), George’s immediate predecessor.

The style of presentation is concise and plain, avoiding epithets and other figures of speech. Typical phrase construction is based on nouns and verbs/participles, as for instance, “Athenians began to revolt [but], having been punished, stopped” (p. 385.24). “Pompeius,” narrates George, “having taken Jerusalem by siege, arrested Aristoboulos, together with his sons Alexander and Antigonos; and then set off for Rome where he celebrated a triumph over kings and chieftains of other tribes” (p. 360.10-12). This is the general style of the book (leaving aside the *kanones*, or concise chronological tables); even such a dramatic event as the murder of Julius Caesar is presented in few words (p. 366.3-6). The characteristics of the historical figures are meager: in describing the emperor Aelius Antoninus (Heliogabalus), George says only that he was effeminate and murderous (p. 437.13-14). Not much is said about Alexander the Macedon save his genealogy (p. 315.21-318.6), and even the dramatic scene of Christ’s execution and resurrection (p. 388.22-389.14) is described in language virtually bereft of epithets.

Some Biblical and apocryphal tales are touched upon, but without apparent concern to exploit the elements of entertainment contained in them. Thus, following Josephus Flavius, George tells how the Pharaoh’s daughter found the infant Moses, and how Tharbe, the daughter of an Ethiopian king, was infatuated with Moses (p. 138f.); the stylistic pattern of this romance is richer than George’s usual method. But after a few paragraphs in a romantic vein, he returns to his favorite theme of chronology, emphasizing that all the historians “of circumcision and of grace” (i.e. Jews and Christians alike), with the exception of Eusebios, agree that Moses was born in the days of Inachos, and place the Exodus in the days of Apis (p. 140.10-16). Sometimes his descriptions of the settings for the action of the history are elaborate: he informs the reader (following Africanus) that there are no living organisms in the water of the Dead Sea, that burning torches stay on its surface and sink only when they are extinguished, that there are sources of asphalt in the area, and so forth (p. 114.12-24). The interest in the Dead Sea may have originated from his visits to the region; more difficult to grasp is why George starts to wax eloquent when describing the booty brought to Rome by Aemilius [Paulus] from Macedonia (p. 324.10-28).

George justifies his style by citing the case of Luke the Evangelist, who possessed “divine brevity” (θεία συντομία), the ability to express in a few words what many writers would describe in lengthy narratives (p. 387.20-22). This search for brevity explains

Theophanes' characterization of George's book as a "short (or rather "concise", σύντομος) chronicle"; evidently, he meant not the actual size of the work, but the manner of wording.

George is more concerned with the order of presentation than imagery. Even in Holy Writ he finds hyperbaton —the inversion of sequence— when the first is named last and the last appears first, and he makes mention of *Gen.* 10.2-31, where the sons of Noah are listed as Japheth, Ham and Shem, although Shem is the eldest and should, according to George, be listed first. Another example is the mentioning of the Kingdom of Babylon before the confusion of tongues, whereas strictly speaking the name "Babylon", which means "confusion" according to his mistaken etymological opinion, can only be used of the place afterwards (p. 105.21-28).

Of lesser interest for the history of literature are the anonymous chronographical treatises which appeared at the time of George and some decades later. We shall not examine these, but only indicate some titles. One short ("concise") *Chronography* is (wrongly?) attributed to the patriarch Nikephoros (of whom we shall speak later);<sup>7</sup> its earliest surviving version dates from ca. 829 (and certainly before 842). Another text (preserved in Vatic. gr. 2210 of the tenth century) is a *Chronicle* compiled in 854, but probably containing earlier layers. It can be considered as dependent on George; its information, however, on the rulers of Constantinople is defective, as is that of some other chronographies.<sup>8</sup> A compilation called *Select Histories* treated the period from the Creation to the emperor Anastasios I; but the sole fragment to have survived from this work covers the events from Adam to the Jewish king Ozias. The work appeared in the 880s.<sup>9</sup>

The historical discourse conventionally titled *Scriptor Incertus de Leone Armenio* differs substantially from these chronological lists.<sup>10</sup> The designation was first used to refer to a work represented by a single fragment (preserved in Paris. gr. 1711), which relates the short reign of the emperor Michael I Rangabe (811-813), and the beginning of the Second Iconoclasm under Leo V the Armenian. A second fragment, devoted to the defeat of Nicephoros I by the Bulgarians in 811, was discovered in Vatic. gr. 2014 by I. Dujčev and, shortly afterwards, its connection with the preceding fragment was pointed out by H. Grégoire. Grégoire suggested further that the two fragments formed the final part of what he named the *Continuator of Malalas*. He also suggested that Theophanes was aware of the second fragment, the description of the expedition of 811.<sup>11</sup> This view is now generally

<sup>7</sup> *Χρονολογιακὸν σύντομον*, ed. C. DE BOOR, *Nicephori Archiepiscopi Constantinopolitani Opuscula historica*, Leipzig 1880, repr. New York 1975, 79-135.

<sup>8</sup> ŠEVČENKO, *The Search for the Past*, 284-287.

<sup>9</sup> A. WIRTH, *Aus orientalischen Chroniken*, Frankfurt a. M. 1894, 3-2; see HUNGER, *Lit.* I, 332f.

<sup>10</sup> A part of what follows has been published as †A. KAZHDAN-L. SHERRY, *Some Notes on the 'Scriptor Incertus de Leone Armenio'*, *BS* 58/1, 1997, 110-112.

<sup>11</sup> I. DUJČEV, *Novi žitnijni danni za pohoda na Nikifora I v Bŭlgarija prez 811 god*, *Spisanie na Bŭlg. Akademija na naukite* 54, 1936, 147-188; ID., *La chronique byzantine de l'an 811*, *TM* 1, 1965, 205-254, repr. in ID., *Medioevo bizantino-slavo* 2, Rome 1968, 425-489; H. GRÉGOIRE, *Un nouveau*

accepted, but there are a number of problematical points concerning Grégoire's hypotheses. Hereafter we refer to the first fragment alone as the *Scriptor Incertus*.

While possible, it is not easy to reconcile the date of the composition of the *Scriptor Incertus* (and hence the *Continuator of Malalas*, following Grégoire's hypothesis), which must date to 815 at the earliest, with the availability of the text to Theophanes, who died in 817/8. However, Grégoire's first point, that there is a connection between the two fragments, deserves more detailed scrutiny. We have to understand that Grégoire's identification is based on a single fact, namely the similarity of the "psychosomatic" portrait of Nikephoros I in the story of the expedition of 811 with that of Michael I in the *Scriptor Incertus*. Portraits of this kind appear time and again in Byzantine chronographical and hagiographical works, and J. B. Bury drew attention to one example, the description of Leo V in the *Chronicle* of pseudo-Symeon Magistros. Bury suggested, however, that this portrayal was derived from the *Scriptor Incertus*.<sup>12</sup> Whatever the case, similarity of portraiture would seem a weak basis for conjecturing common authorship.

In order to make the first fragment a part of his *Continuator of Malalas* it was necessary for Grégoire to subject it to a surgical operation. Not only does the fragment survive in a manuscript of primarily hagiographical texts, but it also contains a typical hagiographical conclusion that required removal (and it is removed in F. Iadevaia's edition); it was also necessary to remove the reference to the conversion of "the godless Bulgarians" (ed. Iadevaia, 32.149) in 865, which could hardly be justified in a work that supposedly preceded Theophanes.<sup>13</sup>

But is the style of the two fragments really identical, as Grégoire asserted (without any supporting evidence)? We have our doubts. Of course, similar expressions can be found in both fragments, for instance ποιήσας ἡμέρας τινάς (p. 28.43, 29.51 and 51.50, 71.584-85), but there are differing features as well. First of all, the *Scriptor Incertus* abounds with non-classical words borrowed from the spoken language: μουλτεύσαντες (p. 44.144, cf. μούλτος in Theoph. 476.16), πάντα χρυσίου (p. 51.51, cf. Theoph. 470.11, 13 etc.), ἐρόγευσεν (p. 55.158, cf. ῥόγα in Theoph. 486.4 etc.), ποιούντες μαϊουμάδας (p. 40.47, cf. Theoph. 451.26), τσαγγάριος (p. 60.288), στραγλομαλωτάρια καὶ νακοτάπητα (p. 56.184-185), στρογ-

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fragment du 'Scriptor Incertus de Leone Armenio', *Byzantion* 11, 1936, 417-427. Both fragments are republished together by F. IADEVAIA, *Scriptor Incertus*, Messina 1987. GRÉGOIRE's hypothesis is accepted "beyond all reasonable doubt" by J. WORTLEY, *Legends of the Byzantine Disaster of 811*, *Byzantion* 50, 1980, 544.

<sup>12</sup> J. B. BURY, A Source of Symeon Magister, *BZ* 1, 1892, 572-574, see an emendation by C. DE BOOR, Ἐπάγουρος, *BZ* 2, 1893, 297. Psychosomatic portraits are to be found in George the Monk 1, 322.11-25, as well as in the *SynaxCP*, such as in the entries on St. Akepsimas (col. 189.19-22) or on St. Philetairos (col. 695.46-696.2).

<sup>13</sup> On the basis of this passage L. TOMIĆ, Fragmenti jednog istorijskog spisa IX veka, *ZRVI* 1, 1952, 78-85, dated the text in the second half of the ninth century.

γυλοπρόσωπος (p. 50.27), and so on.<sup>14</sup> There is not a single word of this type in the Story of the expedition of 811. Describing Nikephoros' followers, the author of the Story uses general terms *patrikioi*, *archontes*, *axiomatikoi* (p. 27.7) whereas the *Scriptor Incertus* is not afraid of specific terms such as *logothetes* (p. 51.70, 52.95) or *megas domestikos* (p. 43.130).<sup>15</sup> Another lexical distinction between the two texts is the *Scriptor's* affection for the word *λοιπόν* which opens at least twenty-nine sentences, whereas we find only two such usages in the Story of the expedition.

It seems that the style of the Story of the expedition is more dynamic than that of the *Scriptor*: not only is the narration about the battle of 811 teeming with verbs of movement, but a less dramatic episode, Nikephoros' actions in Krum's capital, contains numerous active verbs and participles: ἤρξατο διαμερίζειν, ἀνοίξας, διένειμε, ἀνελθών, διακενῶν, ἠγάλλετο καὶ ἔλεγεν, etc. On the other hand, the *Scriptor* has a predilection for verbs of stability: describing the expedition of Michael I against the Bulgarians he employs such verbs as ἴσταντο παρατεταγμένοι (twice p. 41.59 and 61), στήρω (l. 63 and 71), παρατάξαντο (l. 57); even ἔρχομαι appears in a figurative sense, with ἦλθον εἰς ἀδυναμίαν (l. 65). Later on, verbs of flight and persecution are used, primarily ἔφυγον and κατεδίωξαν, which vividly depict the retreat of an army.

The causes that bring about events in both fragments are treated differently. Nikephoros, in the Story of his expedition, is arrogant, he boasted of his justice and is sure of God's support; he perished, explains the author, because of his foolishness and deceptiveness (p. 32.154-155). Michael I, in the *Scriptor Incertus*, explains the defeat of his father-in-law by referring to a much more general cause: God, he declares, was not benevolent (οὐκ εὐδοκεῖ instead of the edition's εὐδοκεῖ) to Nikephoros and his kin (p. 44.133-135). The image of Nikephoros, the protagonist of the first fragment, is relatively free from sweeping generalizations. While the anonymous author evidently does not like Nikephoros, he nevertheless envisages him as a human being, albeit a bad (arrogant) one; the image of Leo V, the protagonist of the *Scriptor Incertus*, is that of a standard "tyrant": to describe him the writer piles up commonplace negative epithets such as cruel, impious, adulterer, cowardly, miserable, the son of perdition, he who destroyed the Church, and so on. Yet the *Scriptor* was able to observe details. His dialogues are colorful. For instance, he narrates how the *patrikios* Thomas asked the emperor to send two wagons (or horses — ὀχήματα, instead of ed. ὀνόματα) to carry away the sick and crippled patriarch [Nikephoros] (p. 68.511-515). The description of the enemy, however, is abstract.

Thus it might be more prudent to consider the two fragments as independent. The Story of the expedition of 811 is a *martyrion*, written (probably in the second half of the

<sup>14</sup> On the rare term στεφανίτης that the *Scriptor* shares with Theophanes see I. ROCHOW, Zwei missverstandene Termini in der Chronik des Theophanes, *BS* 47, 1986, 26f.

<sup>15</sup> Similar lexical differences can be observed between Theophanes and the Story of the expedition of 811: Theophanes (p. 491.27) boldly speaks of a σοῦδα, while the anonymous author prefers, in the corresponding passage, the classical φραγμός (p. 29.72 and 31.104)



ninth century) in a language remote from the colloquial idiom. It was close in character to the *Martyrion of the Twenty Sabaites*, while the *Scriptor Incertus*, in its vocabulary and in its animosity toward Iconoclasm, reminds one of Theophanes and could have been produced as an attempt to continue “the jewel of middle Byzantine historiography”.

Photios devoted an entry of his *Bibliotheca* (cod. 67) to a certain Sergios the Confessor. The man may be identified as St. Sergios the Confessor, praised in an entry in the *Synaxarium of Constantinople* and in an anonymous kanon, who was born in the capital to a noble family and, being an Iconodule, was persecuted and exiled by the emperor Theophilos (829-42). There is no reason to see in him Photios' father, whose name was also Sergios.<sup>16</sup> Photios relates that Sergios' book began with the deeds of Michael II,<sup>17</sup> returned to the lawless actions of [Constantine V] Kopronymos, and then reached the eighth year of the same Michael. Sergios, says Photios, described in detail Michael's state and Church affairs, his military actions and his theological views. Sergios' language was, in Photios' judgement, lucid and simple, his vocabulary, figures and other elements of discourse clear, so that the work seemed to have been produced extemporaneously; the book possessed natural grace and was free from over-elaboration. The language of the *logos*, concludes Photios, is appropriate for an ecclesiastical history.

One may suppose that Sergios served as a source for historians who worked in the tenth century,<sup>18</sup> but it is impossible to prove such a hypothesis. Also we cannot prove that it was Sergios who authored the fragments known as the *Scriptor Incertus* (especially since the *Scriptor* begins with the reign of Michael I, perhaps even with the reign of an earlier emperor). The only certain fact is that the *Chronicle* by Sergios (now lost) was written in the second quarter of the ninth century, and was devoted to the events of the second half of the eighth and the first quarter of the ninth centuries; it presented events from the Iconodule view-point and was, in Photios' opinion, coherent and plain in vocabulary. Such a manner of writing, created or recreated by George Synkellos, was typical of many historical works of the first half of the ninth century.

As far as we can tell, the patriarch Nikephoros was the closest to Theophanes among the historians of this period. We know Nikephoros' biography primarily from his *Vita* written by Ignatios the Deacon (see below, p. 352-356). Nikephoros was born in Constantinople in the 750s to the family of the *asekretis* Theodore; Constantine V exiled Theodore to Nicaea for his Iconodule views. Nikephoros followed his father, but as the Iconoclastic fervor abated, he returned to the capital and served, for some while, as

<sup>16</sup> A. NOGARA, Sergio il Confessore e il cod. 67 della Biblioteca di Fozio patriarca di Costantinopoli, *Aevum* 52, 1978, 261-266; cf. J. SCHAMP, *Photios, historien des lettres*, Paris 1987, 53 n. 1.

<sup>17</sup> Is the emperor being spoken of here in fact Michael III, and not Michael II? Photios did not make a single derogatory remark about this emperor, speaking of his “deeds” and his “belief” (δόξα) in the Godhead. Michael II was an Iconoclast, while Michael III restored icon worship.

<sup>18</sup> F. BARIŠIĆ, Les sources de Génésios et du continuateur de Théophane pour l'histoire de Michel II (820-829), *Byzantion* 31, 1961, 260f.

secretary "of the emperors" (probably Irene and Constantine VI). He retired, founded several monasteries on the eastern shore of the Bosphorus, came back to Constantinople ca. 802 and was appointed director of "the largest poorhouse" in the city. He succeeded Tarasios as patriarch of Constantinople (806-15), despite being a layman. His episcopate was full of troubles: Nikephoros attempted unsuccessfully to appease the radical Stoudites whose political aim was to undermine imperial authority in ecclesiastical affairs, and by 815 he had to deal with the resurgence of the Iconoclastic movement; he did not yield to the demands of the emperor Leo V and refused to sign the decisions of the Iconoclastic council of 815. He had to go into exile, and in 828 he died in the monastery of St. Theodore near Chrysopolis.<sup>19</sup>

Several of Nikephoros' works survived, principally his treatises defending the cult of icons (*Antirrhetikoi*, *Apologetikoi*, *Refutation* of Eusebios of Caesarea's theory of icons, etc.).<sup>20</sup> His teaching about the holy icon (like that of Damaskenos) was closely interwoven with his esthetic ideas, with his concept of the image.<sup>21</sup> But unlike Damaskenos, Nikephoros drew widely on Aristotelian material to support his arguments. As P. Alexander formulates it, "it is the new method which characterizes this scholastic period of Iconoclasm, not the traditional and christological arguments."<sup>22</sup>

According to Nikephoros, there is a radical difference between description (γραφή) and circumscription (περιγραφή) (*Antirrhet.* II: PG 100, 356A-357A). Circumscription is an ontological act that establishes boundaries in space, time or category (κατάληψις), while description is an act of imitation, of representing the likeness of a prototype. The icon or likeness is a copy of the original, differing from it in substance but similar in outline, in other words not identical but possessing a relation (σχέσις) with it (*Antirrhet.* I: PG 100,

<sup>19</sup> The main monograph on Nikephoros is that by ALEXANDER, *Patr. Nicephorus*; cf. also LIPŠIĆ, *Očerki*, 268-296; J. J. TRAVIS, *The Role of Patriarch Nicephorus (a.d. 758-828), Archbishop of Constantinople, in the Iconoclastic Controversy*, Denver 1977, as well as the unpublished dissertation by C. J. LARDIERO, *The Critical Patriarchate of Nikephoros of Constantinople (806-15)*, 1993.

<sup>20</sup> A survey of his published and unpublished dogmatic treatises can be found in BECK, *Kirche*, 489-491; cf. also *Tusculum-Lexikon*, Munich 1982, 558-560; R. P. BLAKE, Note sur l'activité littéraire de Nicéphore Ier patriarche de Constantinople, *Byzantion* 14, 1939, 1-15; V. GRUMEL, Les 'Douze chapitres contre les iconomaques' de saint Nicéphore de Constantinople, *REB* 17, 1959, 127-135. On his theological and ecclesiological views see A. J. VISSER, *Nikephoros und der Bilderstreit*, The Hague 1952; J. J. TRAVIS, *In Defense of the Faith: The Theology of Nicephorus the Patriarch of Constantinople*, Brookline Mass. 1984; P. O'CONNELL, *The Ecclesiology of St. Nicephorus I (758-828), Patriarch of Constantinople*, Rome 1972 [OrChrAn 194].

<sup>21</sup> See V. V. BYČKOV, Die ästhetischen Anschauungen des Patriarchen Nikephoros, *BS* 50, 1989, 181-192; M.-J. BAUDINET, La relation iconique à Byzance au IX<sup>e</sup> siècle d'après Nicéphore le patriarche, *Les études philosophiques*, Jan.-March 1978, 92-98; cf. M.-J. MODZAIN-BAUDINET, *Nicéphore: Discours contre les iconoclastes*, Paris 1989; A. AVENARIUS, Der Geist der byzantinischen Ikonodulie und seine Tradition, *JÖB* 42, 1992, 45f.; Ch. BARBAER, From Image into Art: Art after Byzantine Iconoclasm, *Gesta* 34, 1995, 7f.

<sup>22</sup> ALEXANDER, *Patr. Nicephorus*, 191.

277C). Like Damaskenos, Nikephoros emphasized that the original was not “present” in the icon, their relationship was that of form not essence. The icon is not an idol (as the Iconoclasts liked to claim): its external (artistic) qualities are of no consequence. Rather, the function of the icon is to reflect the original, while the idol is “empty” and false, with no original (archetype) underneath. Probably, more strongly than Damaskenos, Nikephoros sought to put emphasis not on the mystical qualities of the image but on its “realistic” imitation/reflection, not on prefiguration of the future but on the copying of the visible cosmos.

Another difference between icon and idol consists in the uniformity of the Christian image: whereas the false (pagan) representations are multifarious, all the icons of Christ are identical. Although they may have individual features, they are torches kindled from the same flame (*Apolog.*: PG 100, 612D-613A). Nikephoros’ theory helps to explain, among other things, the so-called “standardization” of Byzantine imagery: the truth is unique, and its reflection must be uniform, allowing only minor, insignificant variations. The image may be graphic or literary, expressed in words. Nikephoros defines words or discourses (λόγοι) as “icons of objects” (*Antirr.* III: PG 100, 381C). He prefers graphic images to those in words, since they are more persuasive and easier to perceive.

Nikephoros’ *œuvre* is not limited to dogma and polemics. The patriarch played a key part in the revival of historical writing. He authored a chronicle entitled *Concise History* (Ἱστορία σύντομος), the title usually understood as “Short History” or (in Latin) *Breviarium*.<sup>23</sup> Nikephoros’ *History* survived in two manuscripts: Vatic. gr. 977, which stops at 769,<sup>24</sup> and London. Add. 19390, which relates events up to the year 713.<sup>25</sup> Scholars are still discussing which of them is closer to the author’s original, or whether they represent two authorial revisions. Another thorny problem is the date of the completion of the *History*: C. Mango suggests, albeit as a “tentative conclusion” that the work was compiled “as early as c. 780”;<sup>26</sup> P. Speck, basing his view on Nikephoros’ political tendencies expressed in the *History*, thinks that the work reflects the situation of 790 and therefore

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<sup>23</sup> C. MANGO, *Nikephoros, Patriarch of Constantinople, Short History*, Washington 1990 [CFHB XIII= Dumbarton Oaks Texts X], with a detailed review by P. SPECK, *BZ* 83, 1990, 471-478 and another by B. FLUSIN, *REB* 50, 1992, 278-281, the latter handling primarily the history of the text. This edition is reproduced, with a modern Greek translation, by L. KOSTARELE, Athens 1994. The Eng. tr. by N. TOBIAS-R. SANTORO, *An Eyewitness to History: The Short History of Nikephoros our Holy Father the Patriarch of Constantinople*, Brookline Mass. 1995, is based on the old edition.

<sup>24</sup> C. DE BOOR, *Nicephori archiepiscopi Constantinopolitani opuscula historica*, Leipzig 1880, 1-77.

<sup>25</sup> L. OROSZ, *The London Manuscript of Nikephoros’ Breviarium*, Budapest 1948.

<sup>26</sup> C. MANGO, *The Breviarium of the Patriarch Nicephorus, Byzantium: Tribute to A. N. Stratos*, Athens 1986, 551; in the preface to his edition (as above n. 22, 12) MANGO suggests a slightly different date: “perhaps, to the 780s.”

had to have been produced close to 790-92.<sup>27</sup> No less confused is the question of the sources of Nikephoros: in many cases (from the events of 668 on) he evidently had a common source with Theophanes, and it is often postulated that this source may be the "Great Chronographer".

We know about the *Megas Chronographos* only from additions to the *Paschal Chronicle* in Vatic. gr. 1941, copied by a single hand of the eleventh century (another manuscript, Stockholm, Königl. Bibl. Va 7:2, is late, contains only part of these additions, and has no independent significance). The text consists of eighteen fragments<sup>28</sup> and twice refers to the *Megas Chronographos*; the second reference, in fragment thirteen, is evidently the product of misunderstanding: it promises to speak "about portents", but narrates instead the routing of the Roman army by the Chagan. The fragments form two groups in the manuscript: fr. 1-12 and 15-18 are copied together, fr. 13 and 14 stood in two separate places. The two groups differ in their content as well: the first group deals with various natural calamities which struck the empire, principally earthquakes (ten or so cases), supplemented by fire, plague and a downpour of cinder; fr. 13 and 14 depict, respectively, the defeat of an army and the construction of a wall. The last event described in the excerpts is the confused movement of stars at the birth of Leo IV in 750, which gives the *terminus post quem* for the text.

It is usually accepted that the *Great Chronographer* was a work of a chronicler of the second half of the eighth century and that it served as the common source for Nikephoros and Theophanes.<sup>29</sup> On the other hand, Mango, following the hypothesis expressed by P. Maas, suggested that the *Great Chronographer* —as known from the extant fragments— was "a simple derivative" from Theophanes and Nikephoros.<sup>30</sup> Nevertheless, Mango postulates the existence of two Constantinopolitan chronicles used by Theophanes and Nikephoros: one extending to the year 720 and appearing to be favorable to Leo III, and the second being Iconophile, perhaps ending in 769. The existence of these chronicles, we have to remind the reader, is deduced only from the striking parallels in the presentation of various events by Nikephoros and Theophanes. Speck, however, has another explanation for this: he thinks that there was a dossier collected by George Synkellos, who

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<sup>27</sup> P. SPECK, *Das geteilte Dossier. Beobachtungen zu den Nachrichten über die Regierung des Kaisers Herakleios und die seiner Söhne bei Theophanes und Nikephoros*, Bonn 1988 [Poikila Byzantina 9], 429f. In the review of MANGO's edition he even assumes that Nikephoros alluded to the revolt of Thomas the Slav, which would place the *History* in the 820s.

<sup>28</sup> According to the edition by P. SCHREINER, *Die byzantinischen Kleinchroniken* 1, Vienna 1975 [CFHB XII/1], 37-45 (German translation in vol. 3, Vienna 1979 [CFHB XII/3], 11-15).

<sup>29</sup> L. M. WHITBY, *The Great Chronographer and Theophanes*, *BMGS* 8, 1983, 1-20; Id., *Theophanes' Chronicle Source for the Reigns of Justin II, Tiberius and Maurice*, *Byzantion* 53, 1983, 312-345.

<sup>30</sup> P. MAAS, *Metrische Akklamationen der Byzantiner*, *BZ* 21, 1912, 47f.

shared it with Nikephoros, but then continued to work on it and gave it to Theophanes (this explains the differences between the two).<sup>31</sup>

Photios (*Bibl.*, cod. 66) read the *Concise History* in the extended version which ended with the marriage of Leo IV and Irene in 769 (ed. Mango, par. 88). To begin with, he praises the language of the book in almost the same terms as he used when speaking of Sergios: it is plain and clear, without excesses. Then Photios adds some supplementary features: Nikephoros is a true and perfect rhetorician, who avoids “innovations” (νεωτεροποιόν) and follows the well trodden path, and in so doing he would have surpassed many of his predecessors, had he not been too concise (συντετμημένος), thereby losing some grace. Photios has no entry on Theophanes. Did he not take into account the text of Theophanes when characterizing the good qualities of Nikephoros?

### *B. Biography and the problem of authorship (BHG 1787-1792a)*

Theophanes was sanctified by the Byzantine Church, and his life was described by many authors, beginning with Theodore of Stoudios, who outlined the main events of Theophanes' exploits in a letter sent in early 818 (or 817?) to the nuns Megalo (Theophanes' widow) and Maria, and more briefly in a missive to Niketas, *hegoumenos* of Medikion.<sup>32</sup> Afterwards Theodore composed an *Enkomion* for Theophanes in which he emphasized the nobility and wealth of the saint and his wife.<sup>33</sup> In the mid-ninth century the patriarch Methodios wrote a *Vita of Theophanes*, the main episodes of which are the chaste separation of the saint from his newly-wed wife and the foundation of his monastery (see below, p. 372-374).

Some later versions also survived which seem to depend on Methodios; at any rate they convey no additional information of any significance. Latyšev suggests that a short anonymous *Vita* was written by Nicholas of Stoudios. Another *Vita*, authored by a certain Sabas, is known only in an Old Church-Slavonic translation (see below, p. 340).

None of these numerous hagiographers mentions the production of the *Chronography*, but from the *Vita* by Methodios we learn that Theophanes was not illiterate: he mastered calligraphy when he became monk.

<sup>31</sup> The idea was expressed in P. SPECK *Artabasdos, der rechtgläubige Vorkämpfer der göttlichen Lehren*, Bonn 1981 [Poikila Byzantina 2], 151, and developed in ID., *Das geteilte Dossier*, 503-519.

<sup>32</sup> FATOUROS, *Theod. Stud. epistulae* 2, nos. 323 and 319.9-12.

<sup>33</sup> C. VAN DE VORST, Un panégyrique de Théophane le Chronographe par s. Théodore Stoudite, *AB* 31, 1912, 11-23; S. EFTHYMIADIS, Le panégyrique de s. Théophane le Confesseur par s. Théodore Stoudite (BHG 1792b), *AB* 111, 1993, 259-290 with an addition in *AB* 112, 1994, 104.

Theophanes was born ca. 755-60, possibly in Constantinople, to the family of a *strategos*, and at the age of about twenty was appointed a high-ranking courtier (*strator*) by Leo IV (775-80). He married Megalo, the daughter of an influential *patrikios*, but the marriage was of short duration: the spouses separated and settled in different monasteries. Hagiographers affirm that Theophanes participated in the Council of 787; his name, however, is not included among the signatories of this Council. He was a supporter of icon veneration, and Leo V exiled him to the island of Samothrace where he died in 817 or 818.<sup>34</sup>

The authorship of the *Chronography* is attributed to Theophanes both in the manuscripts and in the Byzantine tradition. Mango, however, questioned this attribution and saw in Theophanes only the editor of the text written by George Synkellos, his friend. This view was supported by Speck but rejected by I. Čičurov, Ja. Ljubarskij and I. Rochov; Ševčenko speaks cautiously of “the maximalist interpretation of Mango’s thesis” and expresses no opinion whether and to what extent Theophanes gathered his materials himself “or inherited them from Synkellos.”<sup>35</sup>

Mango brings forth several points in support of his view. Firstly, he refers to the preamble of the *Chronography* (which he considers an authentic product of Theophanes’ pen), where the chronicler calls himself “illiterate and sinful” and praises George Synkellos who left to his friend both the finished book and “materials” (ἄφορμαί) to complete his work (Theoph. p. 4.2). Thus Mango suggests that George Synkellos “compiled a bulky dossier” which he gave to Theophanes for editing and publication. The weak point of this conclusion is, however, the word ἄφορμαί which means primarily “starting point” or even “instigation, stimulus”; rhetoricians used it to designate “material for argumentation”. The theme of the author’s incapacity to write and his yielding to external pressure (of a friend, a superior or a saint) is a common topic of hagiographical *exordia*. Ignatios the Deacon, for

<sup>34</sup> The former date is accepted by C. VAN DE VORST, *En quelle année mourut s. Théodore le Chronographe?*, *AB* 31, 1912, 148-156; the majority of scholars accept the latter date.

<sup>35</sup> C. MANGO, *Who Wrote the Chronicle of Theophanes?*, *ZRVI* 18, 1978, 9-17, repr. in ID., *Byzantium and its Image*, pt. XI; ID., Introduction to C. MANGO-R. SCOTT with the assistance of G. GREATREX, *The Chronicle of Theophanes the Confessor. Byzantine and Near Eastern History AD 284-813*, Oxford 1997, liii-lxiii; SPECK, *Das geteilte Dossier*, 499; more cautious is R. MAISANO, Il ‘sistema’ compositivo della cronaca di Teofane, *Syndesmos. Studi in onore di R. Anastasi* 2, Catania 1994, 279-282. On the other view see I. ČIČUROV, Feofan Ispovednik-publikator, redaktor, avtor? *Viz Vrem* 42, 1981, 78-87; Ja. N. LJUBARSKIJ, Feofan Ispovednik i istočniki ego ‘Hronografii’, *Viz Vrem* 45, 1984, 86; I. ROCHOV, *Byzanz im 8. Jahrhundert in der Sicht des Theophanes*, Berlin 1991 [BBA 57], 40; T. A. DUKET, *A Study in Byzantine Historiography: An Analysis of Theophanes’ Chronographia and its Relationship to Theophylact’s History* (unpubl. dissertation of 1980), 306-337. Cf. ŠEVČENKO, *The Search for the Past*, 287f. Later, P. SPECK, *Der ‘zweite’ Theophanes*, *Varia V*, Bonn 1994 [Poikila Byzantina 13], 431-483, launched the hypothesis of two Theophanes: the saint who had nothing to do with the *Chronography* and the editor (author?) of the *Chronography* who was transformed into a saint by mistake.

instance, announces, in the preamble to his *Vita of Nikephoros*, that he culled the stimulus to write (τὴν ἀφορμὴν τοῦ λέγειν) from his hero.<sup>36</sup> Photios uses a similar expression (*Bibl.* cod. 214, vol. 3, 125.22-24) saying that the judge Olympiodoros encouraged (παρασχεῖν τοῦ λόγου τὰς ἀφορμὰς) Hierokles to write his book *On Providence*. Therefore, while Mango's view of the preamble is possible, one should not necessarily accept it unreservedly.

Secondly, Mango believes that the *Chronography* was completed before the end of 814, since the author characterizes Leo V as "pious" (p. 500.4) a statement that could only have been made, Mango suggests, before the revival of Iconoclasm under this emperor. George completed the *Select Chronography* around 810, and Theophanes, since he began his work after the *Select Chronography* was completed, had only a few years to produce his *Chronography* (810-14). The task was extremely difficult because Theophanes was in these years incapacitated by a grave illness. However, this chronological argument is not as watertight as it looks. Theophanes says that Leo, *patrikios* and *strategos* of the Anatolikon, was selected to seize the imperial authority "because he was pious, very courageous and able in all respects." The sentence is an "alien (or "actorial") speech", expressing the point of view of those who decided the destiny of the throne or even of Leo himself rather than the point of view of the author. Leo came to power as an Iconophile, and changed his position later. The phrase could have been written in 815 or thereafter. On the other hand, George could have shared his material, if he did share it, with Theophanes long before 810. Theophanes, therefore, may have had more time to write the *Chronography* than Mango calculates.

Thirdly, Mango stresses that Theophanes, the son of a *strategos* and himself a *strator*, was not a man of high culture. But was the *Chronography* the product of a sophisticated mind? (We shall return to its stylistic qualities later.) Certainly Theophanes was not illiterate: Mango himself refers to his study in calligraphy, and Čičurov suggests that George saw in Theophanes a historian capable of continuing his *Chronography*. Theophanes evidently corresponded with Theodore of Stoudios, who stressed that the saint's ordeal was the completion of his "divine knowledge" (Fatouros, *Theod. Stud. epistulae* 2, ep. 214.13-14). Later, in the letter to Megalo and Maria, Theodore praised Theophanes not only as a confessor of Christ but also as a man of great reason and, more specifically, as possessing a mind desirous of scholarship and full of divine knowledge (ep. 323.6-7). Indeed, the Stoudite's letter is a panegyric of the deceased. But was Theodore so tactless as to pile up such epithets to magnify an illiterate former officer?

It is true that Theophanes' biographers ignored his literary activity; but the anonymous hagiographer of Michael the Synkellos (see below, p. 257f.), famous grammarian and homilist, neglects as well to mention that his hero was a writer. The silence of the hagiographer is not sufficient, therefore, to justify the assumption that the subject of the hagiography was not a writer. And while Methodios, in his biography of Theophanes,

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<sup>36</sup> *Nicephori Opuscula historica*, ed. DE BOOR, 140.21-23.

drew special attention to the saint's physical training (the pankration, wrestling, running, jumping, hunting and riding), the anonymous biographer of the saint stressed that from his boyhood Theophanes had learned both Holy Writ and "external (i.e. secular) wisdom".<sup>37</sup>

Mango's fourth argument is based on the author's special interest in events in Syria and Palestine—he even seems to have drawn on a number of oriental sources. We do not know anything about Theophanes' travels to the East, whereas it is probably the case that George visited Palestine. But how can we prove that the chronicler's knowledge of the Orient was first-hand? His interest in the wider world was not limited to the Orient—the *Chronography* contains copious data concerning events on the northern frontier of the empire.<sup>38</sup>

Thus, Mango's observations make George Synkellos' authorship possible but not mandatory: George could have entrusted his friend with the task of editing his work, but we have no evidence that he did actually do so.

Mango, however, stops at the most interesting point. "I have refrained from a stylistic analysis," he says, since he sees in the *Chronography* nothing more than a "scissors and paste job".<sup>39</sup> On the other hand, Ševčenko underscores the difference between the two texts in "style" or "level:" "Theophanes' style and learning were inferior to those of Synkellos." We have seen above that, in Ševčenko's perception, "style" was a matter of level of vocabulary and grammar, and George is unquestionably closer to the classical norms of the Greek language. Theophanes was much more medieval an author than his elder friend. Whether we can define his manner of expression as "inferior" is, however, a question of taste.

<sup>37</sup> V. LATYŠEV, *Mefodija žitie*, 4.22-23; *Theoph.*, 2, 4.18-19.

<sup>38</sup> The data are collected and commented upon by I. ČIČUROV, *Vizantijskie istoričeskie sočinenija: 'Hronografija' Feofana, 'Breviarij' Nikifora*, Moscow 1980, 24-144. Cf. also V. BEŠEVLEV, *Sûobštenije na Teofan za osnovaneto na Bûlgarskata dûržava*, *Izvestija na Narodnija musej Varna* 18, 1982, 31-53.

<sup>39</sup> C. MANGO, *The Availability of Books in the Byzantine Empire, A.D. 750-850*, *Byzantine Books and Bookmen*, Washington 1975, repr. in ID., *Byzantium and its Image*, pt. VII, 36 n. 30.



*C. Theophanes' preamble: the problem of self-appreciation*

C. DE BOOR, *Theophanis chronographia*, Leipzig 1883-85; repr. Hildesheim 1963, I, 3f. ;

Engl. tr. C. MANGO - R. SCOTT, *The Chronicle of Theophanes the Confessor*.

*Byzantine and Near Eastern History AD 284-813*. Oxford 1997

Theophanes' preamble differs substantially from *exordia* of late Roman historians, secular and ecclesiastical alike.<sup>40</sup> Both Prokopios of Caesarea and Eusebios are proud of their role as historians whose task it is to bring to future generations a truthful account of momentous events, and elements of similar self-appreciation are present in the *prooimia* of such less individual authors as Theodore Anagnostes and Evagrius. The key points of Theophanes' preamble are his illiteracy and sinfulness, his incapacity to fulfill the role imposed on him from without. It was the "most blessed abbas George", a well-read polymath, who perused uncouneted books of historians and chroniclers and created the history from Adam to Diocletian; before his death George incited his friend to continue his work, even though Theophanes was aware of his own ignorance and understood that the task was beyond his ability. Again Theophanes repeats that George admonished him not to leave the work unfinished, and explains that he set himself to the task "compelled" only "by his obedience to George" (ἀναγκασθέντες διὰ τὴν τούτου ὑπακοήν). He too studied various books and compiled this *chronographeion* encompassing events from Diocletian to Michael I and [his son] Theophylaktos. And then Theophanes goes on to state, like John Damaskenos half a century before him, that he did not introduce "anything of his own" (οὐδὲν ἄφ' ἑαυτῶν), but only what he had found in the books of old historians and writers (λογογράφοι). At the end of the preamble, Theophanes asks his reader to be thankful to God if he is able to find anything of use in the chronicle, and to the chronicler, illiterate and sinful as he is, who worked with the Lord's help. But if anything mistaken is found to exist in his account, it should be attributed to "the illiteracy and laziness of [his] mind crawling on the soil".

In the first part of this volume we came across this same dichotomy: writers of the eighth century relentlessly presented themselves as unable to do their work properly, as compelled by an external force to set to work, yet at the same time as an instrument of the Holy Spirit. This is a literary position, differing from the literary position of a typical *literatus* of the sixth century, but it should not be taken as indicating any real incapacity on the part of Theophanes or any other Byzantine writer who happens to assume such stock-in-trade modesty.

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<sup>40</sup> The problem was raised by I. ČIČUROV, K probleme avtorskogo samosoznaniia vizantijskih istorikov IV-IX vv. *Antičnost' i Vizantija*, Moscow 1975, 203-217, and developed in Id., Mesto 'Hronografii' Feofana v rannevizantijskoj istoriografičeskoj tradicii, *Drevnejsie gosudarstva na territorii SSSR*, Moscow 1983, 20-41. cf. R. MAISANO, Il problema della forma letteraria nel proemi storiografici bizantini, *BZ* 78, 1985, 334.

Theophanes himself rarely makes an appearance on the pages of the *Chronography*. Physically he appears only twice: first, in his recollections about an extremely cold February of 764 when the Propontis froze and he played on the ice with other boys of his age (p. 434.23-24), and second, when he narrates how twenty-five years after the death of Constantine V (i.e. in 800), the most pious of emperors, the patriarch Tarasios and he witnessed a miracle (p. 440.8-10). This surface “objectivity” does not signify, however, Theophanes’ impartiality. Nor should we view Theophanes as little more than a “scissors-and-paste compiler” (Ševčenko’s words, modeled on those of Mango). Certainly, there are repetitions and contradictions in the narrative of Theophanes, and Mango indicates, for instance, that the chronicler refers to the *patrikios* John Pitzigaudes as having been mentioned many times earlier in the narrative (p. 355.29), whereas in fact he had been mentioned only once before (l. 16).<sup>41</sup> But do these contradictions, repetitions and borrowings from various sources mean that Theophanes compiled his material mechanically, without imposing on it any systematic view, any “ideology”?

It is well known that Theophanes was very critical toward both the Iconoclastic emperors and Nikephoros I (despite the latter’s Orthodoxy). This attitude may be explained by the historian’s political stance, his animosity to Iconoclasm and to Nikephoros’ attempts to restrict monastic property.<sup>42</sup> More intriguing is the issue of Theophanes’ attitude toward the emperors of the past. He evidently praised Constantine I, “the most divine and most Christian” ruler (p. 11.33, cf. 13.29, 15.5, 21.27), whose other epithets include “great” (p. 13.32, 16.12), very gentle (p. 20.7), pious (p. 28.23 and 42, 33.17) and “most pious victor” (p. 27.31, cf. 29.36). He presents us with a list of the emperor’s “psychosomatic” virtues: courage, a sharp mind, brilliant education, justice, promptness in good works, dignity of appearance (ἀξιοπρέπεια ὄψεως), success in warfare, and firmness in faith (p. 20.12-17). As R. Scott emphasized, Theophanes developed the image of Constantine he found in Malalas: his Constantine was not just a Christian but an Orthodox Christian, anti-Arian and even anti-Iconoclast.<sup>43</sup>

After Constantine only a few emperors —Theodosios I, Theodosios II and, in particular, Marcian— are eulogized, principally for their piety. Then the position changes: both Anastasios I and Maurice are strongly censured, despite their positive treatment in Theophanes’ main sources, Malalas and Theophylaktos Simokatta.<sup>44</sup> Even if we assume

<sup>41</sup> MANGO, *The Availability*, 36 n. 30. This particular case is not completely clear since ὁ πολλὰ ὡς λεχθεὶς πανεύφημος ἀνὴρ of Theophanes might mean “the famous man much spoken of in many ways”.

<sup>42</sup> F. TINNENFELD, *Kategorien der Kaiserkritik in der byzantinischen Historiographie*, Munich 1971, 60-80.

<sup>43</sup> R. SCOTT, *The Image of Constantine in Malalas and Theophanes*, in P. MAGDALINO (ed.), *New Constantines. The Rhythm of Imperial Renewal in Byzantium, 4th-13th Centuries*, Cambridge 1994 [Society for the Promotion of Byzantine Studies. Publications 2], 57-71.

<sup>44</sup> ČIČUROV, *Mesto ‘Hronografii’*, 43-53.

that he used a different source for the reign of Maurice,<sup>45</sup> it was deliberate choice on the part of Theophanes to recount “anti-imperial” characteristics. Phokas is severely berated, in accordance with the entire Byzantine tradition. There is no overt animosity toward Herakleios but there is no praise either: when Theophanes calls him μέγας (p. 335.4) he means “elder” not “great”; he describes Herakleios’ retreat from Syria (p. 337.8-10) and disapproves of the “so-called Edict” (the *Ekthesis* of 638) which Herakleios promulgated “as if doing something great” (p. 330.21).<sup>46</sup> Philippikos-Bardanes is a heretic and libertine (p. 381.30-32), and Theodosios III is portrayed as being remote from public affairs (p. 385.21-22). Even the role of the great Justinian I is downplayed by Theophanes in comparison with his main source for this period, Prokopios of Caesarea: time and again Theophanes omits to mention the positive characteristics of Justinian inserted in Prokopios’ *History of Wars*, and in so doing he reinforces the significance of Belisarios.<sup>47</sup>

It could be argued that Theophanes, having created the imperial paragon of Constantine the Great, tried to demonstrate that the subsequent rulers of the empire were not on the same level. The concluding pages devoted to the evil actions of Nikephoros I present a contrasting image of the emperor who mistreated the whole population of Byzantium. The empire, in the conscious or subconscious vision of the historian, showed a development from the good Constantine to the wicked Nikephoros.

During the course of this steady decline, various disasters hit the country. Some of them are natural calamities, such as earthquakes, plague, famine; others are social catastrophes. Often Theophanes speaks about tyranny (the word “tyrant” and the terms derived from it are used no less than fifty times in the *Chronography*, mostly in its first half); more than thirty-five times the chronicler employs the word στάσις (riot); related terms such as πόλεμος δημόσιος, πόλεμος ἐμφύλιος, τάραχος, νεωτερισμός, ἀνταρσία, ἐπιβουλή and the like are also frequently used. Certainly, Theophanes found the majority of these words (and events) in his “dossier”, but it was he who was in search of these words and these events.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>45</sup> O. ADAMEK, *Beiträge zur Geschichte des byzantinischen Kaisers Mauricius*, 1, Graz 1890, 12f. On sources for this period see also D. OLSTER, *The Politics of Usurpation in the Seventh Century*, Amsterdam 1993, 1-4, 49.

<sup>46</sup> On Theophanes’ criticism of Herakleios see J. FERBER, Theophanes’ Account of the Reign of Heraclius, in E. and M. JEFFREYS and A. MOFFATT (eds.), *Byzantine Papers*, Canberra 1981, 32-42. Although Ferber ignores Čičurov’s work, he arrives to a similar conclusion, that the *Chronography* was “a meaningfully categorized whole, and not a patchwork of sources” (p. 33).

<sup>47</sup> I. ČIČUROV, Feofan Ispovednik—kompiljator Prokopija, *VizVrem* 37, 1976, 67-73.

<sup>48</sup> I. KRIVOUCHINE, La révolte près de Monocarton vue par Évagre, Théophylacte Simocatta et Théophane, *Byzantion* 63, 1993, 154-172 (cf. ID., Stasis po Feofilaktu Simokatte, Evagriju i Feofanu, *Iz istorii Vizantii i vizantinovedenija*, Leningrad 1991, 47-57) shows how Theophanes reorganized the history of the events of 588/9 described by Simokatta; his attitude to the revolt is less emotional than that of his predecessors and he does not consider it worthy of serious attention. Cf. I. ROCHOW, Zur Rolle der Bevölkerung des byzantinischen Reiches vom 7. bis Anfang des 9. Jh. (610-813) in der

We observed in the previous section that the Byzantine writers of the eighth century largely ignored two major political themes: icon worship and the Arab invasion, and that these issues were introduced by Stephen the Sabaite in the *Martyrion of the twenty Sabaites* and by another Stephen in the *Vita of Stephen the Younger*. It was Theophanes, however, who developed these two topics to the full.

While George Synkellos remains largely oblivious to the question of images, Theophanes takes a clear stand in support of the veneration of icons. The theme of the icon comes to the fore long before he starts describing the age of the Iconoclastic emperors. To begin with, the term "icon" has a "neutral" sense, designating the image in general: Julian, we read in the *Chronography*, ordered that Zeus, Ares, Hermes and other "demons" be depicted together with his own images (εἰκόνες) and punished those who refused to worship them (p. 49.5-7: derived from Theodore Anagnostes, ed. G. Ch. Hansen, p. 59.10-12); Tzathios, the king of the Lazoi, wore royal garments on which there were images of Justin I (p. 168.23-26). It is worth noting that Malalas (p. 413.14-17) and the *Paschal Chronicle* (p. 614.2-5), which were Theophanes' sources for this episode, use another term, χαράκιον, engraved portrait. Theophanes, even when writing about events of the fifth century, allows himself to employ a less restricted use of the term: he discovers in his sources "Iconoclasts" even at that time. During a session of the Council of Nicaea II Theodore Anagnostes is quoted (Mansi 13, 180E-181B) as describing a certain Xenaias who rejected the veneration of icons of angels and of Christ. In the *Chronography* the story is elaborated somewhat: Theophanes relates that Xenaias-Philoxenos, a Persian, former slave and "the servant of Satan", instructed people to reject the icons of the Lord and of the saints (p. 134.11-12). The chronicler borrows from Anagnostes the story of a painter who dared to picture Christ in imitation of the image of Zeus; he was punished and then healed by the patriarch Gennadios (p. 112.29-32 from Anagnostes, p. 107.21-24; the story was cited by Damaskenos as well). Another painter, a Manichaean from Kyzikos, painted bogus icons of saints that caused a mutiny (p. 149.28-150.1; the story may have been adapted from Anagnostes, but there is no independent testimony). Theophanes relates (elaborating the version of George of Pisidia, *Herakleiad* I.218) that Herakleios came from Africa, with icons of the Mother of God hanging from the masts of his ships (p. 298.17-18). Again from George of Pisidia (*De exp. Pers.* I.139-51), Theophanes derives the story about the "made-not-by-hand" image of Christ which Herakleios carried with him on campaign against the Persians (p. 303.17-21). Theophanes refers to an "icon" representing the shameful death of the Arian Olympios (p. 142.14, from Anagnostes, p. 131-33), and to the icons of the patriarch Makedonios, which were taken down after he was removed from office (p. 155.27-28, from Anagnostes, p. 140.14-15). Clearly the theme of the icon attracted him.

It has often been emphasized that Theophanes took special interest in events on the Oriental frontier of the empire, and it has been suggested that Theophanes drew on Oriental (primarily Syriac) sources for his description of these events, even though, as L. Conrad puts it, “the method by which these materials were transmitted to Theophanes is difficult to demonstrate conclusively.”<sup>49</sup> The penetration of information concerning the Arabs into the *Chronography* becomes especially enigmatic if we assume that Theophanes relied heavily on the city-chronicle which, by its nature, was not much interested in events on the frontier of the empire. Moreover, if we assume (and this is a widely held opinion) that Theophanes, in the second half of the *Chronography*, used more or less the same sources as Nikephoros (“the divided dossier”, or a different source), it becomes hard to understand why Theophanes should have given more attention to the Arab theme than the other historian. A simple quantitative comparison is sufficient to illustrate their difference in approach to the Arab theme. To designate the Arabs Nikephoros uses primarily the term *Saracens* (thirty-three times), supplemented also by the other ethnonym, *Arabs* (three times). In the second half of the *Chronography*, Theophanes employs the term *Arabs* no less than eighty-two times (the index of De Boor gives only selective references, which makes calculation arduous and hazardous), *Saracens* thirty-three times and *Hagarenes* (absent in Nikephoros) six times. The difference between the two historians is both quantitative (Theophanes uses the gentile names three times more than Nikephoros) and qualitative (his favorite term Ἀράβες is practically ignored by Nikephoros). It should be noted that in the last chapters of the *Chronography*, in which Theophanes narrates events that took place after those described by Nikephoros, the Arab theme is only infrequently touched upon: the emperor Nikephoros I's enemies were primarily Bulgarians, not Arabs.

Less evident than his interest in Iconoclasm and the Arab invasion is his attitude toward the urban centers of Byzantium. In the first place, his “urban terminology” reveals the change in Byzantine urbanistic perception that took place in the seventh and eighth centuries. For example, the term *κάστρον*, which appears only twice in the first half of the *Chronography*, becomes common in the second half; it is not used by Nikephoros, who prefers its equivalents *πόλις* and *φρούριον*. Further, Nikephoros employs the term *polis* more “broadly” than Theophanes, relating it both to the capital and provincial towns of the empire, whereas Theophanes applied this term primarily to Constantinople and secondly to some centers outside the empire, perceiving the Byzantine provincial centers (like his younger contemporary, the Arab geographer Ibn-Khurdadbeh) first and foremost as strongholds, *kastra*.<sup>50</sup>

<sup>49</sup> L. CONRAD, Theophanes and the Arabic Historical Tradition: some Indications of Intercultural Transmission, *ByzF* 15, 1990, 43. Cf. P. SPECK, *Kaiser Konstantin VI. Die Legitimation einer Fremden und der Versuch seiner eigenen Herrschaft. Quellenkritische Darstellung von 25 Jahren byzantinischer Geschichte nach dem ersten Ikonoklasmus*, Munich 1978, 391.

<sup>50</sup> An undoubted merit of Čičurov's monograph is that it emphasizes the individual features of the *Chronography* and in particular, the difference in the treatment of geographical space between

Theophanes was a historian. He described many events which it was impossible for him to have witnessed personally, and thus he turned to sources. We know his sources for the first part of the *Chronography* (most of them have survived); we are not in such a fortunate position when it comes to the second part of the work. He had only meager information for the decades after Herakleios<sup>51</sup> (as had so many contemporary chroniclers), and we are forced to hypothesize non-extant Greek and Syriac texts which he could have used for the seventh and eighth centuries. On the other hand, we may conjecture that Theophanes (and Nikephoros) relied upon an elaborate oral tradition, their memory (and that of the people in their circle) being stronger than we usually imagine. But fortunately we are not investigating here the scholarly methods of Theophanes. Whatever his sources, he wrote a literary text,<sup>52</sup> and to do this he selected from his sources those materials and words he deemed fit for his purpose.

#### *D. Composition, characters and wording*

Structurally any chronicle is a more complicated work than a *martyrion* or *vita*. It encompasses a substantial length of time (the *Chronography* describes the period from 284 to 813) and is not framed by a clearly defined unity of space. Theophanes deals with the Arab Caliphate, the Franks, the northern shore of the Black Sea, and so on. Naturally, he was conscious of the problem of composition, of how to organize the material he found in the available sources.

Theophanes relates historical facts in chronological sequence, while his main predecessors of the sixth and seventh centuries (Prokopios, Theophylaktos Simokatta, George of Pisidia), whom he knew and drew from, chose to organize their material thematically. Thus Theophanes had to rearrange their compositions or to place under a single year affairs which occurred over a longer period of time.<sup>53</sup> Theophanes could find the chronological principle of composition already in the historical work of Malalas and in the anonymous *Paschal Chronicle*, in both of which the formula "in this year" or "in this indict" is common. Rochov showed, however, that on several occasions Theophanes adds

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the *Chronography* and the *Concise History*. Our examination of the texts revealed different figures, but here is not the place to discuss this difference.

<sup>51</sup> A. S. PROUDFOOT, *The Sources of Theophanes for the Herakleian Dynasty*, *Byzantion* 44, 1974/5, 367-439.

<sup>52</sup> Cf. Ja. LJUBARSKIJ, *Concerning the Literary Technique of Theophanes the Confessor*, *BS* 56/2, 1995, 317-322.

<sup>53</sup> See examples in LJUBARSKIJ, *Feofan Ispovednik*, 73, 79.

datings which were missing in Malalas, or actually changed Malalas' datings, and placed some events in a different order to that of his predecessor.<sup>54</sup>

Theophanes seldom deviates from the principle of chronological composition. One such deviation occurs when he digresses on Muhammad, beginning with the stereotyped formula, "In this year, Muhammad, the leader of the Saracens and the false prophet, died" (p. 333.1-2). Following this there is a flashback: Theophanes returns to Muhammad's mission (the Jews, he says, accepted him as the promised messiah), presents his genealogy and narrates his biography. Breaking his general working principle, Theophanes gives in this excursus a separate concise chronology of Muhammad's life: he spent ten years in hiding, ten years in wars, and the last nine years of his life in the open (p. 334.19-20). Another excursus is devoted to Bulgarian antiquities. It starts with a common formula: "In this year the Bulgarians made inroads into Thrace"; thereafter follows the introductory phrase for a digression: "It is necessary to tell about the antiquities of the Huno-goundouroi, Bulgarians and Kotragoi (Koutrigurs)" (p. 356.19-20). And then follows the digression itself —ranging from the fish in the rivers Tanais and Atel to the defeat of Constantine IV by Asparuch and the peace treaty.

The text of the *Chronography* consists primarily of "annual units", whose lemmata usually indicate the year from the Creation, the year from the Incarnation, and even the years of the reigning emperor, those of some foreign rulers (Persian, Arab) and of the episcopates of patriarchs. Theophanes, however, does not share George Synkellos' obsession with establishing chronological sequence scientifically, nor does he debate with his predecessors, querying, for example, the dates of events. There are serious doubts in fact, whether various dates he accepts are in keeping with reality.<sup>55</sup>

Individual entries are regularly composed of several passages whose role (*fonctionnalité* in the terminology of R. Barthes) is purely chronological; the passages are linked together only by *consécution*, not *conséquence*. Thus the entry for the year 5870 (from the Creation) begins with the Goths' attack on Scythia, Moesia and neighboring regions (p. 64.34-65.3), followed by stories about armed men who appeared in clouds, about a baby born in Antioch who had a single eye in the middle of its brow, four arms, four legs and a beard, about the emperor Valens who returned to Constantinople from

<sup>54</sup> I. ROCHOV, Malalas bei Theophanes, *Klio* 65, 1983, 472 n. 25-26, 473 n. 34.

<sup>55</sup> An attempt to explain and justify Theophanes' chronology made by G. OSTROGORSKY, Die Chronologie des Theophanes im 7. und 8. Jahrhundert, *BNJbb* 7, 1928/9, 1-56; on the other hand, D. OLSTER, Syriac Sources, Greek Sources, and Theophanes' Lost Year, *ByzF* 19, 1993, 228, states: "An exact chronology was not his literary priority." Cf. I. ROCHOV, Zu einigen chronologischen Irrtümern 'Chronographie' des Theophanes, in J. HERRMAN-H. KÖPSTEIN-R. MÜLLER (eds.), *Griechenland-Byzanz-Europa*, Berlin 1985 [BBA 52], 43-49; W. TREADGOLD, Seven Byzantine Revolutions and the Chronology of Theophanes, *GRBS* 31, 1990, 203-227 and ID., The Missing Year in the Revolt of Artabasdos, *JÖB* 42, 1992, 87-93; P. SPECK, Das letzte Jahr des Artabasdos, *JÖB* 45, 1995, 37-52. See also, MANGO, Introduction to ID.-SCOTT, *The Chronicle of Theophanes the Confessor*, lxiii-lxxiv.

Antioch, was harangued by the citizens and begged by St. Isaac to reject Arianism. There then follows the story of the Goths who defeated Valens and poured into the suburbs of Constantinople, and that of the acclamation of Theodosios I, interrupted by a reference to the *patrikios* Trajanos who believed that "Goths" was the local name for the Scythians. The entry is completed with an account of the acts of the Arians in Alexandria, who delivered Dorotheos to wild beasts (p. 66.4-5). Another entry also begins with a chronological definition, "The same year, September of the fourth indiction" (p. 470.5-6), followed by several independent items: Constantine VI's marriage with Theodote, earthquakes on Crete and in Constantinople, relations with the Bulgarian khan Kardam, and the Arab raid against Amorion.

This annalistic composition<sup>56</sup> may seem patchy, but in fact it reflects a new philosophy of history: the causation of events is beyond our understanding, it is more profound than human reasoning, which can contemplate only surface connections. Time is "logical" in itself, and the narrator has to do nothing more than to follow its unceasing flow. Given this philosophical standpoint, Theophanes encounters the situation which some of his predecessors in the seventh and eighth centuries had to tackle, namely, the situation we have called "monotony." If divine causation of historical events is incomprehensible and the human mind unable to organize material on a thematic ("subject-matter") basis (such as the Vandal wars in Prokopios or Herakleios' Persian expedition in George of Pisidia) the tale becomes indivisible, deprived of parts and bounds; it has a beginning (the Creation of the world), but no logical end. The historian stops at the point he reaches before dying, and the continuator joins him, without knowing where he, in turn, will stop. Theophanes' preamble is not a confession of his dependence on George Synkellos; rather, it is the announcement of the new perception of the incessant pace of history which was to continue until the Second Coming of Christ. Having reached this point (the monotony of the incessant flow of time) the writer clashed with the philosopher ("scientist"), Theophanes with George Synkellos, a clash demonstrated by the fact that George avoided dramatic episodes in his digressions, whereas Theophanes time and again interrupts monotonous narration with short stories.<sup>57</sup>

The point where the two chronicles converge is the reign of Diocletian, as stated both in the lemma to the *Select Chronography* of Synkellos and in Theophanes' preface. Synkellos' account of Diocletian is condensed into four lines: "When Diocletian took power he immediately executed the eparch Apeiros, the murderer of Numerianus, [then] marched to Rome and killed Carinus who had unjustly used the power; he ruled 20 years, and through all that time the Romans considered him the best" (p. 472.22-26). Then follows the slaying of four bishops and an extract from Eusebios about Paul of Samosata.

<sup>56</sup> On Theophanes' "annalistic composition" see MAISANO as above n. 35.

<sup>57</sup> On Theophanes' "narrativity" see Ja. LJUBARSKI, *Sjužetnoe povestvovanie v vizantijskoj hronistike*, *Vizantijskie Očerki*, Moscow 1996, 43-46. Cf. ID., *Problema evoljucii vizantijskoj istoriografii*, *Literatura i iskusstvo v sisteme kul'tury*, Moscow 1988, 39-45.



We shall avoid here discussion of the epithet ἄριστος, “the best”, applied to Diocletian, the emperor who in Byzantine tradition was the prime example of the anti-Christian persecutor. By George Synkellos’ time, not only was the *Paschal Chronicle* available, devoting to Diocletian what now fills seven pages in the Bonn edition (p. 510.18-517.5), but also dozens of stories about the executions of martyrs perpetrated by Diocletian and his hangers-on. Theophanes speaks of Diocletian’s “great and most horrible persecutions” (p. 7.15-16), and describes him as “crude” (p. 10.25) and an “evil tyrant” (p. 448.27). But George did not care to portray Diocletian, just as he did not portray Diocletian’s predecessors. Theophanes begins the *Chronography* with ten entries on Diocletian, and in the eleventh he notes: “This year Diocletian and Maximian Herculus, having lost their senses, resigned imperial authority and put on the garb of private citizens” (p. 10.11-12, a statement which is repeated, some lines later, with a reference to Eusebios, p. 11.13-15). Then begins the story of Theophanes’ favorite, Constantine the Great, the son of Helena (p. 11.1-2). Unlike the scanty note by Synkellos on Diocletian, Theophanes’ portrait of Constantine<sup>58</sup> is presented in detail and includes not only elements taken from Eusebios and other ecclesiastical historians, but possibly also from the (oral?) legend of Constantine (to this legend belongs, among other things, the tale of Constantine’s baptism in Rome by pope Silvester, which is introduced by the clause “as some people say” [p. 17.24-28], and the mention of the life-giving cross that provided victories over the Germanic tribes, Sarmatians and Goths [p. 27.31-28.2]). Some of these legendary tales Theophanes may have borrowed from Alexander the Monk’s treatise *On the Cross*, for instance the story of how “Maximian” (Maximin Daia), defeated by Constantine, took off his imperial vestments and dressed in military attire (Alexander says even that he went “naked”), and began traveling from village to village, executing pagan priests who falsely promised him victory; his death is then described in “naturalistic” detail (p. 15.11-15, 21-26, from PG 87, 4056CD).

George Synkellos employed digressions in the form of long scholarly topical quotations from his sources. Theophanes, on the other hand, digresses in historical “episodes” that are incorporated into the annalistic framework discussed above. These episodic units, whose roots lie in late antique narrative sources, are common not only in the first part of the *Chronography*, but in the second part as well. Thus, after a series of short entries Theophanes composes a novelette about the *stratelates* Sergios and the *koubikoularios* Andrew. The novelette begins, as almost every unit in the *Chronography*, with the formula “In this year” (the last year of Constans II [641-68]), after which Theophanes postulates that the *strategos* of Armeniakon, Saborios (Shapur, a Persian by descent), revolted against the emperor Konstas (Constans II) and dispatched the *stratelates* Sergios to the caliph Muawiya (661-80) vowing to support Muawiya if he launched a war

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<sup>58</sup> See R. SCOTT, The Later Image of Constantine in Byzantine Chronicles, *Byzantine Studies in Australia. Newsletter* 10, 1982, 17f.

against Byzantium. Immediately Constantine IV, "the son of the emperor [Constans]", sent his representative, the *koubikoularios* Andrew, to Damascus. After this annalistic statement Theophanes paints a scene interspersed with lively dialogue. Andrew entered the hall in Damascus where Sergios was sitting with Muawiya, and Sergios, on seeing Andrew, got up to salute him. Muawiya scolded the rebel for being cowardly, and Sergios tried to make an excuse by referring to custom. The two Byzantines bargained with Muawiya, and finally the messenger of Shapur won, having promised to pay "taxes" to the caliph. Following these negotiations the "barbarian" troops marched to assist Shapur, but Andrew trapped Sergios and executed him. Later on Shapur perished at Adrianople (in Bithynia) when his horse bolted and Shapur hit his head on the city gate; "God," concludes Theophanes, "gave victory to the emperor." He adds, finally, that during the winter, when the snow was heavy, Andrew, at night, seized Amorion and slaughtered the entire Arab garrison (p. 349-351).

There are other "episodic units" in the second section of the *Chronography*, such as the story of Leontios' enthroning in 695 (p. 368.15-369.30) and the oath and the coronation of Constantine VI in 780 (p. 449.12-450.23). These novelettes include "naturalistic" details and direct speech, and are completely different from George Synkellos' scientific prose.

One of the most attractive "episodic units" is the tale about Justinian II's return to power in 705 (a parallel discourse is to be found in the *Chronicle* by Nikephoros, par. 42). The tale contains numerous details: the *chagan* of Chazaria married his sister Theodora to Justinian; when the *chagan* decided to kill him Justinian fled to Tomis; the Bulgarian khan Tervel supported him, and so it goes on. Many items of this tale are nothing other than wayward elements typical of hagiographical narratives: Theophanes describes, using the vocabulary of *martyria* (p. 375.4-9, 13-14), how Justinian tormented and executed his enemies in Constantinople, and he even puts in the mouth of the throng a quotation from Ps. 90.13, "You step on the asp and basilisk and trample the lion [an allusion to the emperor Leontios?] and dragon" (l. 10-12). This line from the Psalter is frequently found in hagiographical texts. Justinian's courtier Myakes is said to have entreated him not to punish his adversaries if God should give him back his kingdom. Justinian retorted, "If I spare a single one, may God drown me on the spot," yet despite his cruel answer he escaped the storm (p. 373.23-28) —again a hagiographical stereotype. Then Theophanes turns to the theme of prediction typical of saints' *vitae*. Justinian appointed as patriarch a certain recluse, Kyros, since the man predicted the emperor's restoration to the throne (375.14-16). The theme is reintroduced at the end of the episode when the historian relates how another recluse, a heretic able to foresee events (προορατικός), predicted the enthroning of Philippikos-Bardanes (p. 381.7-8). Theophanes' imagination seems to have been swept up by the net of stereotypes, despite the obviously unholy character of the protagonist of the tale. None of these hagiographical elements appears in Nikephoros' account of the events.

Theophanes includes in his narrative "direct" hagiographical stories, for instance Constans II's reprisals against Maximos the Confessor (p. 347.7-14) and Pope Martin (p.

351.16-24), or Constantine V's execution of Stephen the Younger (p. 436.27-437.7, repeated in an abbreviated form p. 443.14-18). In the tale about Justinian II these hagiographical accessoires are used to characterize the actions of an evil person, and they take on the colour of an unrealized parody. The pseudo-hagiographical element emerges as well at the end of the account of the reign of Maurice: to the story of the murder of the emperor's children as reported by Theophylaktos Simokatta, Theophanes adds (referring to unnamed narrators) that from the corpse of the last slaughtered child milk gushed together with blood, so that everybody who witnessed the scene cried in sorrow (p. 290.8-10). Milk gushing with blood from the wounds of a martyr is clearly a hagiographical stereotype. Theophanes is far from treating Justinian as a saint, and the saintly vocabulary only underscores the insanity of the emperor's behavior. Even in the case of Maurice's children the use of hagiographical stereotypes seems slightly out of place. In chapter 7 (below, p. 295-313) we shall return to this problem while discussing other discourses of the ninth century distorting stereotypes.

The *Chronography* is the history of the deterioration of the imperial power from Constantine the Great to Nikephoros "the Evil", and it is natural that its protagonists are emperors of Constantinople. One of the rulers most hated by Theophanes is the Iconoclastic *basileus* Constantine V, the "tyrant" (p. 441.6), enemy of the Church (p. 440.4) and of the Virgin (p. 448.4), mad and impious (p. 436.27), precursor of the Antichrist (p. 400.1), utterly abominable (p. 413.26). Theophanes piles up epithets of revulsion, but he gives very few concrete details about Constantine's repulsive activity apart from his Iconoclasm and persecution of monks, supplemented by the emperor's involvement in magic and demonology (p. 413.22-24). Theophanes had difficulty with his negative characterization of Constantine's policy. For example, the "tyrant" was successful in his wars: together with his father, Leo III, he routed the Arabs at Akroinon (p. 411.21-23); he seized Theodosiupolis and Melitene, and took captive [many] Armenians (p. 427.15-16); he subjugated Sklaviniiai in Macedonia (p. 430.21-22). Theophanes becomes particularly eloquent when describing Constantine's victories in Bulgaria, including the battle of Anchialos (p. 432.29-433.10) and the invasion of Lithosoria (p. 447.19-26). K. N. Uspenskij even suggested that the historian had at his disposal a pro-Iconoclast source which he followed despite his general Iconodulic sentiments,<sup>59</sup> but probably Theophanes' position can be explained without the *deus ex machina* of a lost source. He wrote the *Chronography* at a time when the country was shaken by the Bulgarian victory over Nikephoros I, and Theophanes himself relates that some "lawless" people eulogized Constantine "the

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<sup>59</sup> K. N. USPENSKIJ, Očerki po istorii ikonoborčeskogo dviženija v Vizantijskoj imperii v VIII-IX vv. Feofan i ego hronografija, *VizVrem* 3, 1950, 393-438 and 4, 1951, 211-262. See objections of G. OSTROGORSKY, *Geschichte des byzantinischen Staates*, Munich 1963, 123 n. 1. HUNGER, *Lit.* 1, 338, however, accepts the existence of "eine ikonoklasten-freundliche Quelle" because Theophanes calls Leo III "pious emperor" (Theoph., 396.8).

abhorred by God (θεοβδέλυντος, a specific word of Theophanes? See also p. 390.31) and thrice-unhappy” for his success in the wars against the Bulgarians (p. 496.14-16); the people even hollowed out his grave and jumped inside calling not God but Constantine to come to the aid of the imperiled state (p. 501.6-12). The conjuncture of events was such that the historian was unable to silence the “tyrant’s” military achievements. But Theophanes did try to denigrate the image of the victorious *basileus*, to ridicule him. He begins in the usual way with a standard annalistic statement: “This year, to the impious emperor Leo the even more impious son Constantine was born.” He supplies a note on the empress Maria who is called efficacious (ἐμπρακτος, p. 400.3 and once more below, l. 15). And then comes the story about Constantine’s baptism when the horrible infant defecated in the holy font; Theophanes refers to trustworthy eyewitnesses who stood by and allegedly witnessed the patriarch Germanos predict on this occasion that Constantine would cause “a great predicament” for the Christian Church (p. 399.28-400.13). Theophanes did not know yet the contemptuous sobriquet *Kopronymos* imposed on Constantine by later generations, but the legend about the defecation scene is something he either had heard about or invented.

Later on, having described Constantine’s cruel treatment of Iconodules who were hanged, dragged through the streets of Constantinople, blinded, mutilated and flogged, Theophanes concludes the description with a contemptuous comment: “[Constantine], however, luxuriated in music and banquets and entertained his courtiers with obscenity and dances” (p. 442.28-29). The theme of the nether region of the body and of physical delight prepares the ground for an apparent volte-face: yes, Constantine won “a great victory” over the Bulgarians; he then returned to Constantinople, with booty and captives, arranged a triumphal procession and proclaimed the war noble, “since he met no resistance and there was neither slaughter nor bloodshed” (p. 447.23-26). But the irony is evident: the great warrior, for whose assistance Theophanes’ contemporaries prayed in their impiety, happened to be successful when the enemy did not resist him. And in order to reinforce the ironical sense of the episode Theophanes attached here to Constantine the same epithet ἐμπρακτος that had encased the shameful scene of the prince’s defecation in the font.

The equivocal approach to the image of Constantine V reveals itself not only in the acknowledgement of his military success. Theophanes also describes his works in Constantinople, such as the restoration of the aqueduct demolished by the Avars. For the restoration work, he says, the emperor gathered numerous craftsmen from around the empire (p. 440.17-24). Theophanes indicates their professions, their places of origin, and their exact numbers and also notes that the emperor assigned *archontes* to supervise them. The restoration was a great achievement and the passage ends with the statement: “On the completion of the work, water ran into the city.” Though there is no direct lexical coincidence (except the main verbs συνήγαγεν and ἦγαγεν) between the two stories, Theophanes has employed a Biblical passage as his source, Solomon’s construction of the

Temple: "He engaged seventy-thousand men (i.e. laborers) and eighty-thousand quarrymen on the mountain and three-thousand six-hundred men to superintend them" (II *Chron.* 2.2). The structure of both passages is identical. Theophanes' account, however, contrasts markedly with the version of the patriarch Nikephoros who mentions neither numbers, professions, or supervisors, but simply states that Constantine collected "a great number of artisans skilled in construction" (par. 85.8-10). Theophanes, unlike Nikephoros, intentionally created a parallel between the hated Constantine and the wise Solomon.

The complexity of Constantine V's image is not limited to its dichotomy (tyrant on one hand and warrior/builder on the other) nor to the ironical resolution of this dichotomy. Theophanes also attempts to depict his loathed protagonist in motion and development. Constantine is the archenemy of icon veneration, but he has evolved in his animosity toward "the Church and Orthodoxy"; his first *silentia* against the holy images, says Theophanes, paved the way for his future absolute impiety (p. 427.19-24); only later did he and his partisans make manifest their inglorious heresy (p. 428.8-9).

The double image of Constantine VI and his mother Irene in the *Chronography* is very complex and contradictory. Irene restored the veneration of icons, and therefore is called by Theophanes most pious (p. 454.6, 475.28, 476.5), courageous and intelligent (p. 478.2); nevertheless, the chronicler narrates how cruel she was in the first year of her reign (p. 454.20, 454.31-455.1), declares her anxious to obtain imperial power (p. 464.15-16), and describes how she conspired against her son Constantine VI and ordered that he be blinded. Even the sun was obscured for seventeen days, no rays penetrated to the earth, and everybody agreed that it was because of the blinding of the emperor (p. 472.18-22). This ambiguous depiction of Irene sheds some light on the enigmatic words *παράδοξως θεόθεν* (p. 454.6-7) which characterize the empress' ascension to the throne in the *Chronography*: on the one hand, she received her power from God, whose will and purposes are beyond human understanding; on the other, it was a "strange" occurrence (however this can be interpreted).<sup>60</sup>

In passing, Theophanes touches on the physical qualities of Constantine VI: at twenty he was strong and good at everything (p. 464.18). The young prince shares with Irene the merit of restoring icon worship (p. 454.6-12), of signing the decisions of the Seventh Ecumenical Council (p. 463.8-9), and of renovating the shrine of St. Euphemia (p. 440.2-3). But his military actions proved to be failures: the Bulgarians defeated him at Markellai (p. 467.29-33), and he fled from the Arabs (p. 472.1-2). The story of Constantine's divorce is presented without passion: Theophanes only states that the emperor hated his wife Maria and urged her to go to nunnery (p. 469.23-26). After a few words on military actions, there follows a brief phrase saying that the emperor "lawlessly" became engaged to Theodote, the *koubikoularea* of the empress Maria (p. 470.1-3). Theophanes returns to Constantine's

<sup>60</sup> D. MISIOU, 'Η Ειρήνη καὶ τὸ 'παράδοξως' τοῦ Θεοφάνη, *Byzantina* 10, 1980, 169-177, suggested a simpler interpretation of the word *παράδοξως* "miraculously". But what was miraculous in her succeeding a deceased spouse?

second marriage, once more relating that Platon, *hegoumenos* of the Sakkoudion monastery, broke off communications with the patriarch Tarasios, who accepted the new marriage, and with Joseph, *hegoumenos* of the Kathara monastery, who celebrated the marriage. The angry emperor punished the monks of Sakkoudion (p. 470.24-471.5). While recognizing that the marriage is “lawless”, Theophanes is far from adopting the irreconcilable position of Platon and Platon’s nephew Theodore of Stoudios, who was Theophanes’ close friend.

The mother and the son are not presented in black and white only; although Theophanes disapproves of some of their actions, he does not apply to them the peremptory tone reserved for Nikephoros I. They were not ideal people, but they were not categorically bad either.

Minor figures rarely become the subject of elaborate characterization. Some of them are borrowed from Theophanes’ sources, especially Prokopios, as for instance in the case of Gelimer (p. 187.28-188.1), or have a hagiographical colour, such as the portrayal of the blessed patriarch Germanos (p. 406.25-31, 407.16-409.21), reminding one of the [later?] *Vita of Germanos*. More arresting are Theophanes’ attempts to picture some of his characters not only by using indiscriminate labels (such as “unintelligent, difficult and incontinent” [p. 135.35] or “manly and arrogant” [p. 102.15-16]), but also by means of describing their actions. Using an image borrowed from the Biblical Samson, Theophanes narrates how the pope Vigilius was dragged from his asylum; he grabbed the pillars supporting the altar and turned them over, since he was big and heavy (p. 225.23-24). Although Theophanes based his tale of Vigilius’ stay in Constantinople on Malalas’ account (p. 485.4-7), this vivid episode is absent in his predecessor. The characterization of the Monophysite Severus of Antioch (p. 157.30-34) is thought to have been taken from Theodore Anagnostes (p. 143.21-23), but in fact it is conjecturally restored to the edited text of Theodore only on the basis of Theophanes. In this passage the chronicler relates that the Orthodox (particularly the monks) had avoided communion with Severus who took revenge on them using the crowd of villagers: they murdered many people, overturned their altars, and melted the holy vessels of the Orthodox. The portrayal is significant not only because Severus and his allies are presented in action, but also because his actions are similar, in microcosm, to the Iconoclastic persecutions described in the second half of the book. If Theophanes was not following Anagnostes in this passage, it is possible that he used his personal anti-Iconoclastic experience to outline the behavior of the Monophysite patriarch of Antioch.

Theophanes’ phrase structure is usually simple and dense. Like George Synkellos he uses copiously verbs and participles, avoiding epithets and rhetorical embellishment. As in the case of the *Miracles of St. Artemios* this is not due to a lack of education, but to a conscious choice of style. When he wanted Theophanes could be rhetorical. For example, he records the speech of John of Cappadocia who begged the emperor to consider, before declaring war on the Vandals, the length of the journey, the expanse of the sea (in the original: τὰ τῆς θαλάσσης πελάγη), the uncertainty of victory, the anguish of defeat, the

futility of regret (p. 188.20-23). The sentence is constructed of periods (*isokola*) interrupted only once by an unbalanced statement “a distance of 140 days by land.” The passage is borrowed from Prokopios, *Wars* 3, 10.8-17, although Prokopios has no periodic construction. Moreover, Theophanes omits Prokopios’ stress on the uncertain outcome of the conflict, “that is in the lap of the god,” a phrase that could easily have been adjusted to the needs of a Christian interpretation of warfare.

Another passage demonstrates that Theophanes could employ the complicated, perhaps even overly complicated, play on words that Byzantines enjoyed so much. He relates how the emperor Constans II, before a naval battle, dreamed that he dwelt in Thessalonike. A dream-interpreter gave a “lexicological” explanation of the name of the city, as θεῖς ἅλωι νίκην, that is, “the enemy will gain victory” (p. 346.1-6). And as it turned out, the Byzantines were routed. The pun thus acquires “material power”.

It was long ago observed that Theophanes (like Malalas before him) holds a special place in the history of the Greek language, between the vernacular and the “fossilized” Byzantine Greek.<sup>61</sup> In the words of H. Hunger, Theophanes employed the *Umgangssprache* to an even higher degree than Malalas with regard to both ethnonyms and toponyms and terms for political and ecclesiastical concepts.<sup>62</sup> I. Rochov has noted many examples of words used by Theophanes which are not to be found in preceding works or are found with a different meaning; she thinks (but gives no figures) that this vernacular vocabulary is more characteristic of the second half of the *Chronography*,<sup>63</sup> in which the historian was freer from established sources. But even in the previous sections, such as those on Maurice or Herakleios, expressions of this kind can be found.<sup>64</sup>

The *Chronography* encompasses the events of five centuries. It goes without saying that Theophanes has used sources, applying the technique of “scissors and paste”. However, he did not perform this task mechanically (although there are repetitions and contradictions in his voluminous work), he had strong political views — *Tendenz*, as P. Speck calls it— and he restructured his sources in accordance with his views. But he was certainly a writer, and as such he may be classed a ninth-century “modernist”, an innovator.

Above all, Theophanes revived the writing of history after the barren Dark Century. Unquestionably, he had predecessors (primarily George Synkellos and possibly anony-

<sup>61</sup> KRUMBACHER, *GBL*, 344. On Theophanes’ grammar see D. TABACHOVITZ, *Sprachliche und textkritische Studien zur Chronik des Theophanes Confessor*, Uppsala 1926. Theophanes used numerous Latin words, probably more extensively than his successors; see P. YANNOPOULOS, *Les éléments latins dans la Chronique de Théophane, Boukaleia: Mélanges offerts à B. Bouvier*, Geneva 1995, 103-122.

<sup>62</sup> HUNGER, *Lit.* 1, 338.

<sup>63</sup> I. ROCHOV, *Beiträge zur Chronik des Theophanes zum mittelgriechischen Wortschatz*, *Klio* 69, 1987, 567-572.

<sup>64</sup> See, for instance, H. MIHĂESCU, *Torna, torna, fratre*, *Byzantina* 8, 1976, 21-35; V. BEŠEVLEV, *Die volkssprachlichen Elemente in den Redepartien bei Theophanes und in den Akklamationen bei Konstantin Porphyrogennetos*, in J. IRMSCHER (ed.), *Byzantinische Beiträge*, Berlin 1964, 141-144.

mous authors of short chronicles) and contemporaries, but unlike George, who produced scientific prose, Theophanes saw his task as the creation of a work of literature. George had filled his *Select Chronography* with chronological lists, long quotations from authorities and short comments, frequently polemical in nature. Apparently, Theophanes did not follow the same “scientific” manner of presentation.

Secondly, Theophanes is not only a historian; he is also a medieval annalist. While he did not invent annalistic principles, he is more consistent in their realization than Malalas or the anonymous author of the *Paschal Chronicle*. Time is the main organizational force in the *Chronography*, even though in some cases this is a fictitious chronological web, allegedly based on different chronological calculations. Time is not only an instrument of formal organization of events. Historical development does have its own intrinsic logic — not the Christian logic of George Synkellos, moving from the sinful Adam to Christ the Savior and to the triumph of Christianity (that had to follow after Diocletian), but the pessimistic logic-decay of the Christian state founded by Constantine that collapsed into Iconoclasm, into the lawlessness of Nikephoros and into the military humiliation at the hands of the Arabs and Bulgarians.

Thirdly, Theophanes focused on two important themes that were practically ignored in the literary texts of the eighth century: the Arab threat and the veneration of icons. The two Stephen-hagiographers were immediate predecessors of Theophanes, but it was in his *Chronography* that both topics found their full treatment and their just place in the teleological process.

By introducing time as the organizing principle Theophanes dealt with the problem of monotony, of the topically indistinguishable (“incessant”) flow of units (entries). He managed to surpass this hurdle. Having broken with the tradition of George Synkellos, he relied heavily upon the use of episodes. We have seen that the author of the *Barlaam Romance* inserted a few parables in order to interrupt the monotony of his narration; Theophanes applies this device much more regularly. In the *Chronography*, short Synkellos-style “unadorned” entries are interspersed with “episodic units” which have not only an instructive function, but also entertain.

In the works of the eighth century, both prose and verse, the “hymnographic” style was predominant; the language was lofty, with only a few attempts (such as those of the author of the *Miracles of St. Artemios*) to approach the spoken idiom. It was Theophanes who moved closer to the vernacular, not only by building simpler, non-periodic constructions, but also by using more widely non-classical names and words.

Theophanes heralds a new stage in the development of Byzantine literature. He was proclaimed saint and was praised as a historian. But the irony of the story is that his work found no real continuation: annalistic historiography did not become fully grafted onto Greek literary culture.